

National Party Boat Owners Alliance, Inc.

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July 1, 1995

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

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Comments in Regard to CI Docket No. 95-55

The National Party Boat Owners Alliance, Inc. has been representing party and charter fishing boats, excursion and ferry boats since the inception of the organization in 1952. NPBOA is a charter member of the RTCM, and has submitted comments to FCC as occasions have warranted through the years.

While we agree with the basic idea of opting to place FCC radio inspections within the private sector, just who should handle inspections is something that demands discussion. The present fees for FCC radio inspections for small passenger vessels are nothing short of outrageous, but will handing this inspection plum over to a "Classification Society" do anything to reduce these fees? We tend to doubt that such a move would provide much of a saving for members who have been hard pressed by the cumulative effect of mandated user fees.

We are stressing the tax aspect of these inspections rather than any aspect of safety that is supposed to be provided through inspection. The present rules for inspection are based on the unreliable transceivers of the past that used vacuum tubes, crystals, and either dynamotor or vibrator power supplies. That equipment was good for the short periods of time in which it operated properly, but was prone to frequent and severe breakdowns. The modern equipment hardly ever breaks down, and because of the new technology is rock solid in frequency. Except for an occasional onceover of an installation to look for bad power and/or antenna connections, the need for any inspection at all is in serious question.

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Given the state of the art of today's marine radio equipment, which has improved to such an extent since it was first required on inspected small passenger vessels, it is our belief that the need for FCC safety inspections has been rendered obsolete. Inspections to satisfy the safety certificate requirement could be handled by FCC Licensed Radio Technicians from local marine electronics service companies. All they would have to do is sign an inspected vessel's radio log indicating that a satisfactory inspection had been made. If anything had been found wrong with the equipment, obviously, the technician would fix it before signing the log. In addition, they could be empowered by FCC to sign a Safety Certificate form to be kept on board and available to a Coast Guard inspector during a vessel inspection. This would more than satisfy safety requirements.

As things stand now, most of our vessel owners do have a FCC Licensed Radio Technician from a local marine electronics service company do a pre-inspection check-up before a scheduled FCC inspection. Some owners even arrange to have a technician standing by. Such pre-FCC inspections usually run between \$50 and \$75. If the private sector can do these check-ups for such a minimal amount compared to the FCC fee, and still make a profit, then that is the direction FCC should go in eliminating inspections on small passenger carrying (under 100 Gross Tons) vessels.

While there might be some political reason for substituting one bureaucracy for another by turning FCC inspection over to a "classification society", ***there is no practical reason.*** As we see it, such action would not alleviate any of the tremendous financial burden under which our sector of the maritime industry is forced to operate; nor would it do anything to enhance safety.

Therefore, NPBOA recommends that radio inspections should be opened up to the private sector, specifically to marine electronics service companies which are qualified to work on these transmitters. They would have to sign the safety certificates and would therefore be responsible for their work. What we do not want is to be subjected to yet another bureaucracy. A so-called classification society's primary function in this instance would be to generate income in order to justify its own existence, to preserve its own hierarchy.

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LAHAINA-LANAI PASSENGER SHUTTLE

EXPEDITIONS

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JULY 4, 1995

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OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON DC 20554

SUBJ: CI DOCKET 95-55

FCC MAIL ROOM

GENTLEMEN:

REGARDING THE USE OF PRIVATE SECTOR INSPECTIONS FOR SMALL PASSENGER VESSELS:

1. SHOULD NOT PERMIT THE USE OF CLASSIFICATION SOCIETIES TO CONDUCT INSPECTIONS.

FIRST, THEY ARE NOT CURRENTLY QUALIFIED TO DO SO.

SECOND, THEY DO NOT MAINTAIN ADEQUATELY CONVENIENT FIELD OFFICES TO PERFORM AT A REASONABLE COST; ESPECIALLY FOR SMALL OPERATORS IN REMOTE LOCATIONS.

THIRD, COST TO SMALL OPERATORS, WHO CURRENTLY HAVE NO USE FOR THE CLASSIFICATION SOCIETY SERVICES, WOULD BE EXCESSIVE.

2. SHOULD USE RADIO TECHNICIANS, ALREADY LICENSED BY THE FCC TO SERVICE AND REPAIR THE RELEVANT EQUIPMENT, TO CERTIFY ITS PROPER OPERATIONAL STATUS IN ACCORDANCE WITH CURRENT STANDARDS.

WE, AS A SMALL COMMERCIAL OPERATOR, OPERATING IN A REMOTE LOCATION, ALREADY HAVE OUR EQUIPMENT PRE-INSPECTED BY A TECHNICIAN TO ASSURE PROPER OPERATION WHEN INSPECTED BY THE FCC TO AVOID REDUNDANT INSPECTIONS AT EXORBITANT COSTS.

THAT SAME TECHNICIAN IS QUALIFIED THEN TO TROUBLESHOOT AND REPAIR ANY PROBLEMS IN ONE TRIP.

3. WE BELIEVE THAT RADIO FUNCTION IS A NECESSARY COMMUNICATIONS TOOL, FCC OVERSIGHT SHOULD BE LIMITED TO ESTABLISHING THE STANDARDS AND MAINTAINING THE APPROPRIATE LICENSING.

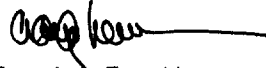
4. RANDOM INSPECTIONS SHOULD NOT BE NECESSARY. ROUTINE USCG INSPECTIONS VERIFY THE RADIO FUNCTION, LICENSE OF OPERATOR, AND PRESENCE OF AN FCC INSPECTION CERTIFICATE.

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5. PRIVATIZATION IN THIS MANNER WILL LIKELY IMPROVE SAFETY, AS THE TECHNICIANS BECOME MORE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EQUIPMENT OPERATION, WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CUTTING THE COSTS.

If you have any questions, please respond.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Craig D. Newnan", followed by a horizontal line.

Craig D. Newnan
President



NEWS

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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June 9, 1995

FCC has issued a Notice of Inquiry concerning the inspection of small passenger vessels. The Commission is seeking comments that will allow us to streamline ship inspection procedures, remove unnecessary rules, improve service to the maritime community and preserve maritime safety.

Currently, the Communications Act of 1934 requires the Commission to inspect the radio installation of small passenger vessels once every five years. The Commission has recommended that the Communications Act be amended to permit the use of non-government organizations to conduct inspections on behalf of the FCC.

We are requesting comments on the following questions, regarding the use of the private sector to inspect small passenger vessels.

1. Should we **only** permit the use of a classification society (such as the American Bureau of Shipping) to conduct inspections?
2. What criteria, if any, should we use to authorize a private sector entity to inspect ships on behalf of the Commission?
3. Should the Commission be involved in an oversight role in the inspection process?
4. Should we conduct random inspections?
5. To what extent, if any, will privatization effect safety?

Submit your comments by July 18, 1995 to the Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, Washington, DC 20554. Reference CI Docket 95-55. If you have any questions, contact Annette Platt at (808) 677-3318.